First-aid services on highways

466. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE : Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any plan to provide first-aid services for accident victims on the highways;

(b) is so, which are those highways and from which States they are passing through;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) whether in future Government would consider itself for such first-aid services scheme while constructing highways?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K. H. MUNIYAPPA) : (a) to (d) Evacuating accidents victims to the nearest medical aid centre and removal of accident affected vehicles is primarily responsibility of concerned State/UT Governments. However, this Ministry provides Cranes and Ambulances under National Highway Accident Relief Service Scheme to States/UTs Government/Non Governmental Organisations for clearing accident sites and evacuating accidents victims to the nearest medical aid centre. Ambulances provided under the scheme have provision for first-aid kit. Similarly operation and maintenance contracts of completed stretches of National Highways managed under Corridor Management Divison of National Highways Authority of India provide for ambulance services which include first-aid services to accident victims.

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare also provides assistance to the States/UTs under the scheme of 'Assistance for Capacity Building' for upgradation of emergency services/trauma care facilities in Hospitals including those located near the National Highways for the purpose of treatment of accident victims.

Implementation of Sethu Samudram Project

467. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are going to implement Sethu Samudram Project; if so, the number of years it would take for completion and the cost thereof;

(b) whether Government have conducted environmental studies regarding the effects on bio-diversity in the Gulf of Mannar due to implementation of this project; and

(c) whether Government have formulated any contingency plan to save rare bio-diversity in the Gulf of Mannar; if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU) : (a) Yes, Sir. The commencement of work on Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project was inaugurated on 2nd July, 2005 and the project is scheduled to be completed in about three and a half years time. The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 2427.40 crores.

(b) Yes, Sir. A comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment Study has been carried out by the National Environment Engineering & Research Institute (NEERI), Nagpur. The NEERI studied all the environment issues including ecological study, in depth, over a period of two years.

(c) Yes, Sir. Keeping in view the ecologically sensitive nature of the project, an elaborate Environment Management Plan has been drawn up to safeguard the bio-diversity of the region during project implementation and operation period.

Foolproof system for issuance of passports

468. SHRI S.P.M. SYED KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are not having a foolproof centralized system in handling issuance and maintenance of passports whereas India is a global leader in the Information-Technology;

(b) if so, the reasons for not implementing/developing such a system keeping in view the increased number of frauds in the passport affairs;

(c) whether Government are going to introduce any new system for passports; and

(d) if so, details thereof including time frame if fixed?